

In January 2011 StudentsFirst released a “Policy Agenda” that advocates for a set of dramatic state and local policy changes in three critical areas proven to have the strongest results for students, in many cases building on the work of education reformers: teacher effectiveness, parental choice and governance/fiscal accountability. StudentsFirst works with selected states (partners on the ground, governors, interested legislators) to support policy development, bill introduction, issue campaigning and adoption of legislation. Specifically, the organization provides technical and advocacy support, deploying organizational resources in a concentrated and coordinated fashion.

### Nevada Legislative Wins for Students: 2011

On June 15, 2011 Governor Brian Sandoval signed three education reform bills (AB 225, AB 229, and SB 197) aligned with the StudentsFirst Policy Agenda and approved by a bi-partisan Assembly and Senate. The bills accomplish the following:

- Eliminate “Last In, First Out” seniority-based teacher layoffs;
- Reform tenure by extending the new teacher probationary period and taking into account performance, including removal of tenure for consistently poor performance;
- Establish a robust statewide teacher evaluation system that includes a strong performance component; and
- Authorize the Governor to appoint the State Superintendent, enabling direct accountability for reform at the state level.



### StudentsFirst Role

StudentsFirst’s involvement in Nevada began in January 2011 at the request of Governor Sandoval, who sought assistance from StudentsFirst in developing a broad array of legislative reforms and providing support for moving Nevada forward with aggressive reform policies. StudentsFirst Founder and CEO Michelle Rhee attended the Governor’s State of the State address, where he outlined his policy agenda. In April, CEO Rhee and StudentsFirst staff returned to Nevada to meet with the governor, legislators, parents, and business and community leaders. StudentsFirst also hosted a teacher meeting at which CEO Rhee spoke to nearly 100 teachers about why reform in Nevada was a priority. CEO Rhee again returned to Nevada in early May to attend a state dinner with Governor Sandoval and leaders of the legislature, including the Democratic leaders of both houses, to advocate for passage of strong reform policies amidst a tough budget debate.

Over the course of the next ten weeks, StudentsFirst worked with the leadership in the House and Senate as well as the Governor to support the development and ultimate passage of the legislative package. Specifically, StudentsFirst ran a issue advocacy campaign that included the following:

- **Policy Development and Consultation.** StudentsFirst worked with the governor’s staff and advised Democratic lawmakers on ensuring that the legislation considered was as strong as possible.
- **Lobbying.** Because the governor and legislature were primarily focused on a heated budget battle, which included debate over education funding, StudentsFirst needed to direct focus on policy reforms in order to build support. StudentsFirst hired a lobbyist and secured teachers and parents to testify at key committee hearings.
- **Grassroots Mobilization.** Over the course of six months, StudentsFirst grew its membership in Nevada from 1,200 to 3,800 members. In addition to testimony at hearings, these members called, emailed, and sent letters to their legislators, creating pressure for the legislature to pass meaningful education reforms. Specifically, over 1,300 people sent emails to Nevada lawmakers through StudentsFirst’s website tool and over 4,400 sent emails to lawmakers through Students-First sponsored petitions hosted by change.org and Care2.
- **Earned Media.** StudentsFirst generated three op-eds in Nevada papers, as well as several editorials, as a result of media interviews and the paid ad campaign.
- **Paid Media.** StudentsFirst ran a sophisticated five-week paid media campaign in both major markets (Las Vegas and Reno-Carson City) that included television, radio, and Internet. The TV ads featured a group of teachers, including a two-time teacher of the year, who were threatened with lay-offs due to LIFO. One of the teachers was also featured in the radio ad and wrote an op-ed that was published in both major papers.

| NEVADA                  |   |                                   |   |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Technical Support       |   | Advocacy Support                  |   |
| Policy Tools & Services |   | Political & Grassroots Engagement |   |
| Model Policy            | ✓ | Press Release/Endorsement         |   |
| State Specific Policy   | ✓ | Joint Press Release               |   |
| Policy Consultation     | ✓ | Testify                           | ✓ |
| Staffing Advice         |   | State “Hub” Page                  | ✓ |
|                         |   | Member Activation                 | ✓ |
| Supplemental Support    |   | Live Rallies & GOTV               |   |
| Resources & Funding     |   | Earned Media (Local Press)        | ✓ |
| Paid Media              | ✓ | Polling                           |   |
| Contribution            |   | Field Team                        |   |
| IE                      |   | Lobbyist                          | ✓ |
| Litigation Support      |   |                                   |   |

### Partners

StudentsFirst was the lead entity involved in advocating for Nevada education reforms. Additional support was provided by local chambers of commerce and charter school leaders.